

Four Persons Reported Positive in Delaware for Human West Nile Virus

DOVER – Four persons in Delaware have tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). The cases, three in New Castle County and one in Kent County were reported to the Division of Public Health (DPH) in mid-late August. None of the individuals reported symptoms. Instead the virus was found as part of bloodwork related to a routine medical procedure. The mosquito-borne illness can become serious and DPH reminds people to take precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

WNV is transmitted by mosquitoes, generally from spring to fall. Although nearly 80 percent of people infected with WNV will not become ill and only a little less than 20 percent of those infected will develop West Nile fever, with mild symptoms (fever, headache, body aches, a skin rash on the chest or back and swollen lymph glands), one in 150 people infected will develop severe infection (West Nile encephalitis or meningitis).

Symptoms of severe WNV infection include headache, high fever, stiff neck, and/or tremors and muscle weakness. The elderly and those with weakened immune systems are most at risk. Anyone who experiences any of these severe symptoms should seek medical help immediately. Symptoms may progress to stupor, disorientation, coma, convulsions, paralysis, and possibly death.

“West Nile Virus may not cause symptoms in most people, but in others it can cause a serious illness or even be fatal,” said DPH Division Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “It’s easy to forget that something as simple as a mosquito bite can make someone very sick. DPH reminds people to protect themselves and their

families during mosquito season, which can last until the first hard frost.”

Mosquitoes also can also carry several other diseases that can make people very sick and/or lead to death. Some human diseases carried by mosquitos in the U.S. include dengue, chikungunya, as well as several viruses that cause brain inflammation (encephalitis) such as Eastern equine encephalitis and Saint Louis encephalitis. To avoid mosquito bites and reduce the risk of infection, individuals should:

- When outside, wear shoes, long-sleeved shirts, and pants. Mosquito netting can protect one’s face and neck, and infants in carriages, strollers, and playpens. Mosquitoes are most active at dusk and during the early-morning hours.
- Mosquito repellents containing DEET can be applied to the skin, but will last only a few hours before reapplication is necessary. Use insect repellent containing less than 50 percent DEET for adults. The current American Academy of Pediatrics and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend using 10 percent to 30 percent DEET for children older than 2 months old. The higher the strength, the longer the DEET provides protection which varies from two to five hours.
- Read labels carefully and always follow the instructions. DEET should not be used on children younger than 2 months.
- Prevent mosquitoes from entering the house by using screens and keeping windows and doorways tightly sealed. Mosquitoes prefer shallow water and tall vegetation. Eliminate standing water in your yard by changing birdbath water weekly, regularly draining pet dishes and plant pot saucers, and checking gutters, pool covers, and tarps for standing water. Store buckets, wheelbarrows, and wading pools upside down. Keep grass mowed.

In Delaware, there were no reported human WNV cases in 2014,

three cases in 2013, and nine cases in 2012 with one fatality. To report suspected cases of human WNV, call the DPH Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at 888-295-5156.

To report high numbers of biting mosquitoes or other concerns, contact the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) Mosquito Control Section field offices:

- Glasgow Office (upstate) – 302-836-2555, for all of New Castle County and the northern half of Kent County, including Dover.
- Milford Office (downstate) – 302-422-1512, for the southern half of Kent County south of Dover, and for all of Sussex County.

Calls will be answered by staff from Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Callers after business hours or during weekends or holidays should leave a message giving their name, phone number, address and a brief description of their need or problem.

For more information on DNREC Mosquito Control, call 302-739-9917 or visit the [DNREC website](#).

For more information about WNV in horses, contact the Delaware Department of Agriculture at 302-698-4500 or 800-282-8685 (Delaware only).

For more general information on WNV, visit the [CDC website](#) or for more information about mosquito bites and other diseases they may cause visit [this page](#) on their site.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.